

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 VO-03 SCA-01 L-03 PPT-01
INSE-00 CPR-01 A-01 OPR-02 SS-15 NSC-05 /045 W
-----011355Z 022373 /50

R 312115Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7832

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FOR ARA/AND/V, CU AND VO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CVIS, US, VE, ELAB, SCUL
SUBJECT: PEREZ STATE VISIT: BILATERAL VISA AGREEMENT

REF: CARACAS 4497

1. GIVEN VENEZUELA'S RECEPTIVITY AND EXPECTATIONS REGARDING A CLOSE ASSOCIATION, WITH THE U.S. WE HAVE A NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITIES DURING PRESIDENT PEREZ' VISIT TO STRENGTHEN BILATERAL RELATIONS. AMONG THESE IS A CATEGORY OF INITIATIVE WHICH STRENGTHEN FRIENDSHIP AND INTERACTION. ONE SUCH INITIATIVE, WHICH THIS TELEGRAM ADDRESSES, WOULD BE A CONSULAR AGREEMENT TO BE SIGNED DURING PRESIDENT PEREZ VISIT WHICH WOULD LIBERALIZE VISA REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VENEZUELA. THE EMBASSY FINDS GOV ATTUNED TO ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND INTERESTED IN USG VISA POLICY IN PARTICULAR. TENS OF THOUSANDS OF VENEZUELAN TOURISTS, BUSINESSMEN AND STUDENTS VISIT THE U.S. EACH MONTH, SPENDING MORE PER CAPITA THAN ANY OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD. SUCH A MASSIVE EXCHANGE OF PEOPLES MAKES THE LIBERALIZATION OF VISA REGULATIONS A PARTICULARLY CURRENT AND VISIBLE TOPIC DURING PRESIDENT PEREZ' STATE VISIT. WE HAVE A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE SYMBOLICALLY AND TANGIBLY TO
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THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA OUR APPROVAL OF AN IDENTIFICATION WITH ONE OF LATIN AMERICA'S FEW DEMOCRACIES. WE HAVE SEVERAL SPECIFIC PROPOSALS IN THIS REGARD.

2. INDEFINITE VALIDITY B-1/B-2 VISAS. INDEFINITE VALIDITY IS THE VISA EQUIVALENT TO MOST-FAVORED-NATION STATUS IN TRADE. THE GESTURE IMPLIES A COMMITMENT TO OPEN BORDERS AND THE FREE FLOW OF PEOPLE AND IDEAS. A DEMOCRATIC VENEZUELA CAN BE EXPECTED TO SEE SUCH A MOVE AS REFLECTING THE U.S. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOV ADHERENCE TO SUCH COMMON VALUES AND AS A

GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY WITH ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA THAT SUPPORTS OUR STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS. ADOPTING THIS PROPOSAL WOULD ALSO HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE NON-IMMIGRANT WORKLOAD AT THE EMBASSY, A CONSIDERABLE RELIEF TO ONE OF THE HIGHEST VOLUME POSTS IN THE WORLD.

3. ID CARD AS VISA FOR GOV EMPLOYEES. MEXICO NOW ENJOYS A SYSTEM WHEREBY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES MAY TRAVEL TO THE U.S. BY PRESENTING THEIR OFFICIAL ID CARDS. WE RECOMMEND ESTABLISHING A SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT WITH VENEZUELA. IN ADDITION TO FACILITATING TRAVEL AND EMPHASIZING THE MORAL AND PHILOSOPHIC ASPECTS OF U.S.-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS, THIS INITIATIVE IS A DIRECT GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BOND WHICH WOULD HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS THROUGHOUT THE GOV IN TERMS OF GOODWILL AND OUR ACCESS AT THE WORKING LEVEL.

4. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR GRAN MARISCAL DE AYACUCHO (GMA) SCHOLARS. PRESIDENT PEREZ TAKES DESERVED PERSONAL PRIDE IN THE GMA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM HE FOUNDED AS ONE OF THE FIRST ACTS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD WAIVE THE VISA REQUIREMENT FOR GMA SCHOLARS UPON PRESENTATION OF A DOCUMENT PRODUCED BY THAT FOUNDATION ITSELF WOULD BE A FORM OF SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT TO AN EXTRAORDINARY PROGRAM WHICH REPRESENTS AN INNOVATIONAL APPROACH TO VENEZUELA'S NEED FOR SKILLED PROFESSIONAL MANPOWER IN A RAPIDLY DEVELOPING ECONOMY. THE GMA PROGRAM IS UNIQUELY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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IDENTIFIED WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ AND, AS SUCH, IS A PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE THEME TO STRESS DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT.

5. DESIGNATE THE GMA FOUNDATION AS SPONSOR FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR (J) VISA PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH SECONDARY TO THE PRECEEDING, THIS PROPOSAL IS A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT ON THE WAY THINGS STAND NOW. THE AMERICAN SPONSOR OF THE GMA PROGRAM HAS BEEN TERMINATED AND 4,000 GMA SCHOLARS WILL NOW BE FORCED TO OBTAIN F STUDENT VISAS, A TROUBLESOME AND TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS FOR THE STUDENT AND THE EMBASSY. DESIGNATION AS PRIMARY SPONSOR WOULD PERMIT THE GMA FOUNDATION TO ISSUE THE PROPER FORMS FOR J EXCHANGE VISITOR VISAS HERE IN VENEZUELA, A BOON TO STUDENTS AND EMBASSY ALIKE.

6. EXTEND THE VALIDITY OF BOTH F AND J VISAS TO FOUR YEARS. THIS PROPOSITION HAS SEVERAL DISTINCT ADVANTAGES. FIRST, IT IS COMPATIBLE WITH EITHER OF THE TWO PRECEEDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND WOULD BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS, NOT JUST GMA SCHOLARS. SECOND, FOUR YEAR VISAS WOULD BE A MAJOR AID TO VENEZUELAN STUDENTS SINCE MOST WOULD NEED ONLY ONE VISA IN THEIR ACADEMIC CAREER. THIRD, THE EMBASSY WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY BY THIS MEASURE BECAUSE STUDENT VISA APPLICATIONS COINCIDE WITH THE SUMMER AND CHRISTMAS TOURIST VISA CRUSH.

THE EMBASSY HAS PROPOSED FOUR YEAR F AND J VISAS AND THE ELIMINATION OF VISA FEES FOR THOSE CATEGORIES TO THE GOV. THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT ALLOWS US TO PRESENT THIS PROPOSAL FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT RATHER THAN AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL.

7. ELIMINATION OF VISA FEES. AS MENTIONED ABOVE, THE EMBASSY HAS PROPOSED THE ELIMINATION OF F AND J VISA FEES TO THE GOV. FEES ARE ALSO COLLECTED FOR SEVERAL OTHER CATEGORIES OF VISAS. THE FEES CHARGED ARE INSIGNIFICANT AND AMOUNT TO A TIRESOME BOOKKEEPING EXERCISE. THE MUTUAL ELIMINATION OF SUCH CHARGES WOULD BE ONE MORE GESTURE OF TRUST AND COOPERATION.

8. USE OF "BEARER" STAMP FOR VENEZUELAN NATIONS.
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THE PRINCIPAL VALUE OF THE "BEARER" STAMP IS TWOFOLD: TO SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE THE SPEED OF VISA OPERATIONS AND, CONSEQUENTLY, TO REDUCE THE WAITING TIME FOR VISAS BY THE VENEZUELAN PUBLIC. AS AN INITIATIVE IN ITS OWN RIGHT, THE POINT IS A BIT TECHNICAL. INTEGRATED INTO AN OVERALL PACKAGE, HOWEVER, IT ADDS THE EXTRA FEATURE OF USG CONCERN FOR THE ORDINARY VENEZUELAN CITIZEN WHO MUST WAIT IN LONG LINES FOR A VISA. WE PROPOSE THAT THE STAMP BE USED ONLY IN THE PASSPORTS OF VENEZUELAN NATIONALS.

9. PRESIDENT PEREZ' VISIT GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE GAINS ON TWO LEVELS. FIRST, THROUGH A GESTURE WHICH EMPHASIZES U.S.-VENEZUELAN SOLIDARITY IN HANDS-ACROSS-THE-WATER FASHION, CERTAINLY OUR PRIMARY CONCERN. SECONDLY, HOWEVER, A CHRONIC AND GROWING PROBLEM FOR THE EMBASSY--THE 1977 NOV WORKLOAD WILL DOUBLE THAT OF 1973--CAN BE REDUCED THROUGH A SYNTHESIS OF SEVERAL OF THE ABOVE PROPOSALS. A CONSULAR AGREEMENT (BY AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES) SIGNED DURING PRESIDENT PEREZ' VISIT WOULD ADMIRABLY SERVE THE FIRST GOAL AND, BY BEING BROUGHT TO HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION, ENABLE US TO SPEEDILY ADDRESS THE SECOND.

10. FROM THE EMBASSY'S POINT OF VIEW, A PACKAGE WHICH ENDORSED INDEFINITE VALIDITY OF B-1/B-2 VISAS AND PERMITTED THE USE OF A "BEARER" STAMP WOULD BE IDEAL. THE USE OF GOV ID CARDS WOULD, OF COURSE, BE AN ADDED BONUS. FOR STUDENTS, A POLICY WHICH AIDED GMA SCHOLARS AND GRANTED FOUR-YEAR J AND F WOULD PLEASE PRESIDENT PEREZ AND HELP VENEZUELAN STUDENTS AS WELL AS THE EMBASSY. ABOLITION OF VISA FEES IS ANOTHER SWEETNER WHICH COULD BE ADDED SHOULD THE VENEZUELAN AGREE. THE INCIDENCE OF VISA FRAUD IN VENEZUELA IS AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD; GUILT BY ASSOCIATION IN THIS RESPECT WITH HER MORE SUSPECT NEIGHBORS FAILS TO RECOGNIZE THIS FACT AND ALSO THAT VERY FEW VENEZUELAN CHANGING STATUS IN THE U.S. OUR NATION HAS PUBLICLY ENDORSED A FOREIGN POLICY OF "CLEAR PREFERENCE" FOR DEMOCRACIES. THESE LIBERALIZED VISA STANDARDS

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WOULD BE A MEANS TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE GOV, SYMBOLICALLY AND
SUBSTANTIALLY, OUR DESIRE TO RECOGNIZE ONE OF LATIN AMERICA'S
FEW DEMOCRACIES.

VAKY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, VISA REGULATIONS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CARACA05425
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770194-1284
Format: TEL
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197705110/baaaewhh.tel
Line Count: 175
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a46fe888-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CARACAS 4497
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2347042
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PEREZ STATE VISIT: BILATERAL VISA AGREEMENT
TAGS: CVIS, ELAB, SCUL, US, VE, (PEREZ, CARLOS ANDRES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a46fe888-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009